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ABSTRACT

The formation and use of the Continuing Education Unit (CEU), a uniform nationally accepted unit that provides a mechanism by which most continuing education activities can be measured and recorded, was presented at the 1973 National Adult Education Association Conference. The unit, developed by the National Task Force in 1968 to determine the feasibility of a uniform unit of measurement, can be applied to professional continuing education, vocational retraining, and adult liberal education as well as other adult/continuing education programs. Specific administrative requirements were outlined for establishing and maintaining quality control over assignment of the CEU. Also discussed was the use and criteria of the CEU in the new Standard Nine provision of the College Commission of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Latest national developments were more elaborate guidelines from the National Task Force and a working paper on CEU by the Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions of Higher Education. The need was stressed for higher education institutions to prepare now for adult education programs, an anticipated major component of American higher education during the seventies and eighties. (EA)

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THE CONTINUING EDUCATION UNIT AND ADULT EDUCATION

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THE CONTINUING EDUCATION UNIT AND ADULT EDUCATION

Introduction

Recent studies have revealed an ever increasing role for non-credit educational courses, programs, and activities in institutions of higher education--adult and continuing education and extension. The Johnstone study of the mid-sixties indicated that more than 25,000,000 individuals with the United States, exclusive of full-time regular students, are engaged in at least one continuing education program annually. The recent reports of the Carnegie Commission predict that non-credit adult and continuing education programs will become a major component of American higher education during the remainder of the seventies and into the eighties. Those institutions who recognize this fact and begin now to prepare for the adult student will find themselves in

the main-stream of American post-secondary education. These institutions will not be as greatly affected by the declining birth rate and thus declining number of regular full-time students available to the college market. Institutions of higher education can continue to play a significant role in the American social development by providing relevant continuing education programs of quality for the professional agencies, business and industry, government, and the public in general. Thus the advent of the Continuing Education Unit.

The Early Beginning ... The National Task Force

In July of 1968, a national planning conference was called in Washington, D.C. This conference was sponsored jointly by the National University Extension Association, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, the U.S. Civil Service Commission, and the U.S. Office of Education. The purpose of this conference was to determine the

level of interest in a uniform unit of measurement for non-credit continuing education. Thirty-four national organizations represented at the conference expressed an interest in one aspect or another of identifying, measuring and recognizing individual effort in continuing education.

The interest and sense of urgency for a concerted national movement expressed at this meeting resulted in the creation of a National Task Force to determine the feasibility of a uniform unit of measurement.

The impetus for a uniform unit of measure for continuing education developed as a result of a demonstrated need for an increase in knowledge and the resulting decrease in the utility of prior learning which individuals acquire during their years of formal education. This demand for retraining activities is reflected in the constant increase in participation in continuing education and also in the number of institutions and organizations

offering programs of this kind.

At this same time several organizations and institutions either had initiated or were studying ways of measurement and awards for continuing education students each having little or no relationship to any other system in existence. It appeared that the development of a uniform nationally accepted unit would hold promise of reducing the confusion and fragmentation by arriving at a single suitable means of recognizing and rewarding individual effort in the pursuit of continuing education.

These needs, and others, have resulted in the establishment of the Continuing Education Unit.

THE CONTINUING EDUCATION UNIT IS DEFINED AS FOLLOWS: TEN CONTACT HOURS OF PARTICIPATION IN AN ORGANIZED CONTINUING EDUCATION EXPERIENCE UNDER RESPONSIBLE SPONSORSHIP, CAPABLE DIRECTION AND QUALIFIED INSTRUCTION.

Continuing education, for the purpose of this definition, includes all institutional and organizational

learning experiences in organized formats that impart non-credit education. Continuing education may be applied equally under the proposed system regardless of the teaching-learning format, program duration, source of sponsorship, subject matter, level, audience or purpose.

The continuing education unit may be used for the measurement, recording, reporting, accumulation, transfer, and recognition of participation by adults in programs which in the past have not been recorded in any formal or systematic way.

The unit can be applied with equal facility to professional continuing education, vocational retraining, and adult liberal education as well as other programs in adult and continuing education.

The individual adult student should be able to accumulate, update, and transfer his record on continuing education throughout life in maintaining or increasing proficiency in his career or in making progress toward

his personal educational goals. In the absence of such a universally recognized unit, the concept of education as a continuous process is often lost. This lack of any cumulative record has often results in many continuing education programs being built upon narrowly defined educational objectives and the establishment of only short-termed goals which were usually institutionally oriented rather than student directed.

Thus, the purpose of the CEU is to provide a mechanism by which most continuing education activities can be recorded. It is not expected, on the other hand, that all of the participation in terms of continuing education units will have utility or transferability.

There would appear to be definite institutional and other sponsor advantages in quantifying and recording the total amount of continuing education activity for which such organizations are responsible.

The key to the success and usefulness of the CEU will be found in its discriminating use. While the CEU itself is basically a quantifying mechanism, the administrative process with which it is implemented can and should provide the quality factors to make the CEU a meaningful measurement. Administrative guidelines for the CEU process have been established. It is stressed that the system of recording units of continuing education participants may be related to the current system of permanent records in use at the institution or a separate and parallel system can be designed and maintained. Reference is made again, however, to the elements found in the definition of the CEU, i.e., an organized continuing education experience; under responsible leadership; capable direction; and qualified instruction. It is further emphasized that the number of CEUs for each offering should be determined in advance through the regular channels of the administrative unit

responsible for the implementation of and/or coordination of such non-credit activities and should be done in cooperation with the appropriate departments of the institution or organization.

In the statement of the National Task Force on the Continuing Education Unit the administrative requirements for establishing and maintaining the quality control over the assignment and awarding of the CEU are detailed as follows:

1. A specific high level individual within the continuing education operation of the institution should certify and approve the awarding of a specific number of Continuing Education Units for a program prior to the program offering.

2. The program director for each learning experience should be responsible for certifying that the program was attended and completed by individuals who request Units.

3. The institution is responsible for establishing and maintaining permanent records of Continuing Education Units awarded. The information to be recorded on each individual should include at least the following:

   A. The name of the student

   B. Social Security Number of student

   C. Title of course

D. Course description and comparative level

E. Starting and ending dates of activity

F. Format of program

G. Number of Continuing Education Units awarded

In addition it is suggested as highly desirable that the permanent records include:

A. Evaluation of each individual's performance

B. The name of the instructor and course director

C. Personal information about the students: address, date of birth, educational background, employment, etc.

D. Any cooperating sponsors, company, associations, agencies, institutions, governments, etc.

E. Course classification, i.e., professional, liberal education, vocational technical, job entry, in-service, etc.

It was also stated by the Task Force that it would be helpful if all continuing education activities be

clearly described in terms of audience, purpose, format, content, duration, teaching staff employed, course or experience pre-requisites, other qualifying requirements and levels of instruction so that intelligent judgments could be made if the transfer process of the CEU was instituted.

The College Commission of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

In 1968, at about the same time that the national task force for the CEU was being created, the Executive Council of the College Commission of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools in recognition of the significant changes taking place in the areas of adult education, continuing education, and extension authorized a study for the purpose of revising its standards for accreditation of these areas within the institutions of higher education in the South.

The study was conducted over a two-year period gathering data from 560 colleges through a formal instrumentation process on the academic year 1969-1970. Informal information gathering took place through numerous meetings with institutional representatives--presidents, deans, faculty members, and deans and directors

and students.
of continuing education/ A new standard--Standard Nine--
was developed as a result of the study and was adopted
by vote of the College Delegate Assembly in December 1971.
One of the most significant provisions of the new standard
is the use of the Continuing Education Unit--to give
recognition to the adult and continuing education student;
and to provide an accurate account of total institutional
effort by measuring the non-credit offerings of an insti-
tution in a form equal to the credit hour. The combining
of these two units of measure will more clearly and accurately
indicate the total educational effort of an institution.

The results of the Standard Nine and the CEU after nearly two years of use is very dramatic. The qualitative aspects of adult and continuing education within the institutions have been significantly improved. The opportunities for further improvements in these areas under the new standard are even greater.

Coordinated statewide plans for the use of the CEU have been developed in Georgia, Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida. Others are in stages of development in Kentucky and Texas. Hundreds of individual institutions are now in some stage of implementation of use of the CEU.

An ad hoc committee of institutional representatives worked for about a year to develop and field test specific guidelines for the use of the CEU within an institution of higher education. The criteria developed by this group and now in use within the Southern region for awarding individual continuing education units are as follows:

1. The non-credit activity is planned in response to an assessment of educational need for a specific target population.
2. There is a statement of objectives and rationale.
3. Content is selected and is organized in a sequential manner.
4. There is evidence of pre-planning which should include opportunity for input by a representative of the target group to be served, the faculty area having content expertise, and continuing education personnel.
5. The activity is of an instructional nature and is sponsored or approved by an academic or administrative unit of the institution best qualified to affect the quality of the program content and to approve the resource personnel utilized.

6. There is a provision for registration for individual participants and to provide data for institutional reporting.

7. Appropriate evaluation procedures are utilized and criteria are established for awarding CEU's to individual students prior to the beginning of the activity. This may include the evaluation of student performance, instructional procedures, and course effectiveness.

The University System of Georgia was the first state to develop a coordinated plan for use of the CEU by all thirty institutions within the system--this includes junior colleges, senior colleges, universities, and a medical college. The Georgia plan has been in successful operation for 15 months now and this year for the first time ever has received direct funding from the Legislature for public service based on the CEU.

The State of Virginia which was the second state to develop a coordinated plan took another approach. Under the leadership of the State Council for Higher Education a statewide consortium for continuing education was established by Legislative act. The legislation created six regional consortia and opened participation on a

voluntary basis to the private colleges of the state. The CEU is a part of the state plan. North Carolina and Florida now have operational statewide CEU plans for their respective community college systems. As is evidenced of these examples, much CEU activity is currently going on in the Southern region.

The National Scene

Nationally, two very significant actions have taken place in recent months. First, the national task force for the CEU has moved to develop more definitive and controlled use of the CEU by non-higher educational institutional users by developing more elaborate guidelines. These should be in print and available early in 1974. Second, and most important to the higher education - post secondary field the Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions of Higher Education (FRACHE) has developed a working paper on the use of the CEU. This paper is currently being circulated by each of the regional commissions for reaction and information--with the ultimate goal of becoming a FRACHE policy statement.

New Opportunities in University Extension

With the advent, development, and implementation of the Continuing Education Unit college and university extension has a new opportunity in service. The long and well established commitment to service by many institutions can enter into a new era of service as a result of the qualitative effect of the CEU upon service non-credit courses and programs. Also the extension-service function can demonstrate a new level of public accountability for such programs through the quantifying aspects of the CEU. Programs of quality designed in response to a direct public need can be developed acending to the CEU guides which will give due recognition to the learner and which can be accountable within the institution in fulfillment of its educational responsibility.

The implementation of the CEU is one way in which the institutionof higher education can respond to the challenge of the Carnegie Commission report "Quality and Equality" (1970, p. 1) which said:

> What the American nation needs and expects from higher education in the critical years just ahead can be summed up in two phrases: quality of results and equality of access. Our colleges and universities must maintain and strengthen academic quality....at the same time, the nation's campuses must act energetically and even aggressively to open new channels to equality of educational opportunity.

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